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MEDICO-LEGAL INVESTIGATIONS.

Page 124 by Thad. M. Stevens
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THE subject of chemico-legal investigations is an all-important one, not only because of its great intrinsic value, but also in view of the knowledge of minutia and nice manipulations involved. Experience, which is cumulative, brings to light in nearly every case brought to our notice, in which such examinations have entered, the fact that even those who have an average chemical knowledge, and are above, it may be, the average of general practitioners as regards skill and knowledge with reference to subjects generally, still, for some reason, do not bear the test when called upon to perform an analysis. This, we say, not wishing to detract from general practitioners, nor yet from amateurs in chemical knowledge, for the best chemists, those even who stand at the head of the column, find their need of most minute investigation, careful manipulation, and the utmost diligence, so that mistakes may be prevented and a right conclusion arrived at. The truth of the above applies more particularly to chemico-legal, than chemico-medical inquiries; for of the latter there are many points of interest to the student and patient, enquiring practitioner, and much that even he, busied with the cares of a large practice, can and ought to make himself familiar with. Much of the chemistry and microscopy of urology of various morbid growths and pathological productions, simple tests for the detection of adulteration of medicinal substances, etc., should be studied by every physician—it should not only be considered a pastime but a necessity.

But even here, in the domain of chemico-medical inquiries, we doubt but that there is a large field that never will be worked over by the general practitioner. First—Implements are neces-

sary. Some cannot, more will not procure them. Others, having them, use them spasmodically for a while, then cast them aside, weary in well-doing; and others, say what you will, ignore them in toto. Of these, the second class are the most benighted. They have a partial assortment of instruments—test-tubes and spirit lamp, with glass bottle are found stored away in their offices; and a smattering knowledge of their use in their brains, and with this a self-conceit that ruins everything, they undertake that which they cannot perform, and either work for nought, or worse, pronounce their faulty results as true, and grossly mislead others, if not themselves. Far better had they been contented to remain with the other two classes, viz.: having nothing to work with, or no inclination to act.

It is well, then, to know what we may all undertake with a fair prospect of obtaining safe results, and enabling us to form correct conclusions; and what we may well shun, unless we are fully prepared, and intend to devote ourselves to it, with that diligence that will command success; for here, as in many other departments of medical science, there is an amateur as well as a thorough and practical knowledge. The one is not to be refused or ignored—the other is alone to be trusted in elucidating difficult points.

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